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TWO NECESSARY REVOLUTIONS

by Howard Comfort

The probability, if not the inevitability, of a third World War is being increasingly accepted. Already the expectation is the leading historical fact of this generation. Prevention of this war is of incomparable importance to every person on the planet.

The horrible prospect rests upon a syllogism, as follows: Two-Power worlds eventually fight it out between the two major competing Powers and their satellites; we have a Two-Power world: therefore we shall eventually fight it out. This syllogism has nothing to do with ideologies, the United Nations, or any other especially contemporary phenomena; if true at all, it is true for all people and all times.

The only escape from the conclusion is either (1) to demonstrate the falsity of one of the premises, or (2) to alter the political pattern stated in the minor premise. I doubt if the former can be convincingly done. That leaves the alternative of alteration.

Matters standing as they do, the best substitute for our Two-Power world is the voluntarily "federated" One World of which much has been written, but toward which little that is concrete has been accomplished. Nearly anyone will concede that it provides one way of escape from a third World War; but on a little reflection hardly anyone welcomes the sacrifices of privilege and sovereignty which a politically unified world implies. "Dat ole debbil" sovereignty was described as "The Issue" in HUMAN EVENTS of April 4, 1945, and nothing has subsequently developed to dethrone him. In this respect, the United Nations has only made a bad matter worse.

The renunciation of privileges and sovereignty is an act of uniquely clairvoyant political inspiration. It has been performed only rarely in history, with the American Union as its most conspicuous contemporary example. The drafting of the Federal Constitution was a political revolution much more profound than the military Revolution preceding it.

Politically speaking, the writing of a World Constitution is the paramount revolution demanded of our times. Everyone now realizes that the Charter of the United Nations is not this Constitution.

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If logic ruled in politics and other human affairs, the trick would be comparatively easy. But it does not. To hit mankind, including the American public, where it lives, one must go deeper than intelligence, theory and logic. A second necessary revolution, underlying the political, lies in the spiritual realm. Without springing the spiritual trigger, with its emotional and psychological implications, all the argument for world government will get only perfunctory and academic acceptance. It will remain in the stage which Vernon Nash felicitously calls "Yes, but --".

II

What is the spiritual slogan upon which the gospel of voluntary political world unity can be hung? I suggest that this unification can be considered as an "atonement", and that the concept is not too out-landish to become the actual basis of political reorganization. "But why", you ask, "and for what must we 'atone'?"

For answer, I pass over the specific moral sins which the American Government, like all others, has committed over the years; from the mistreatment of the Indians, to that of the Nisei or the "War Criminals". Such sins exist, without doubt, and without doubt we pay up for them in one way or another; but their discussion would be controversial, and would not get us far. I also pass over the even less definable <u>future</u> sins, implicit in our present course, leading to World War III. Instead, I would note four points of relevant implications:

(1) However wide apart the Government and the people of this country, they are still not so separated as to relieve the people of moral and political responsibility for the Government's actions. Unlike Hitler's Germans, we cannot plead either impotence or irresponsibility regarding our Government's policies.

(2) One need not be a hardened and self-convicted sinner to make atonement; Oedipus the King is as liable as Judas Iscariot. One often "atones" for actions and policies which have no label of sin about them at all, and even for actions prompted by the most virtuous intentions. Indeed, "atonement" is a frequent consequence of the most satisfying and conspicuous success -- for instance, of military success.

(3) It is the innocent bystander who, more often than not, atones for actions not his own, and in a currency far different from that of the original cause. Though guiltless in our generation, we still atone for the slave trade of centuries past; and many an anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist is bitterly aware that both he and his unborn descendants will

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indefinitely continue to atone for the fruits of Nazism and Fascism right along with everyone else -- atonement by undernourishment and rickets, by a shattered economy, by a devalued educational standard, by degradation of morals and ethics, by loss of civic rights. No particular justice lies therein; it is simply the inescapable atonement for being present at the time and place. In the long run, no living human being can disassociate himself from the unpleasant consequences of having been born into the Twentieth Century, dominated by the Western European brand of civilization.

(4) "Atonement" is merely the spiritual counterpart and equivalent of a principle universally accepted in the physical sciences, namely Newton's Law of Motion that every action has an equal and opposite reaction -- which embodies the refinement that qualitatively and quantitatively the payment utterly balances the debt.

Thus analyzed, "atonement" slips easily into the pattern both of social experience and of the physical world, and it need not present any particularly baffling selling problem.

III

But beyond its sociological and physical authority, atonement implies an august imperative transcending human choice or control, an accountability to a compulsion beyond man's wishes or the technical cleverness of man's laboratories. To the materialist, this indomitable "thou must" may be hardly more than a streamlined set of graphs and statistics which are his masters; to the freethinker, it may be a "moral law"; to the conservative Christian, it may suggest the Day of Judgment. The imperative is broader than any religion, or lack of religion; it attaches to the universal rather than the parochial.

Atonement may be made willy-nilly or voluntarily; and therein lies, for a brief interval, the world's opportunity to save itself. World War III would be a willy-nilly atonement, and a frightful price to pay. Voluntary atonement, the willingness and even the eagerness to pay off the whole score now, to find real solutions instead of blaming the common failure upon someone else: this is the path of self-interest and idealism, and of moral and intellectual honesty as well.

Of course the citizens of the world are not clamoring to give away their national existences and sovereignties in atonement for their sins or their successes. Superficially, just the reverse. But there is some reason for supposing that the American public, and "just folks" everywhere, are somewhat ahead of their leaders in perceiving realities.

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Some recent home-grown examples are the otherwise inexplicable successes of the Dunkirk-to-Dunkerque and Friendship Train style of enterprise, popular and spontaneous demonstrations of the will to give something away in order to square a vague and mystical, but fundamentally very real account. If these movements mean anything, it is not unbelievable that the world-wide public may take the further step of recognizing the quasi-moral principle that a certain price must be paid for everything worth having, including world peace. It is principally the practical politicians who, for some obscure reason, try to succeed by cultivating the same "frames of reference" as have perennially boomeranged so disastrously.

IV

To convert this country or the world to a revolutionary and dynamic doctrine of "atonement" would be the psychological equivalent of a general religious conversion, and would be of the same magnitude.

As such, there is nothing impossible about such a conversion; a few of them are matters of record. A contemporary case in point is Gandhi's amazing fusion of spirituality and political action into an integrated program which has not merely succeeded in India, but has commanded admiration and loyalty, as well as fear of its power, throughout the world. In any case, the doctrine of atonement, or its moral equivalent by some other name, is necessary to give the movement for political World Unity both intellectual and moral authority and permanence superior to that of a political device. Technological smartness and formula-finding will not provide the answer, and everyone knows it. On the contrary, troubled times beget a yearning for moral and spiritual leadership of uncompromising integrity and fidelity to principle, and such leadership would command a substantial following now.

An immediate vote on World Government would muster, in the United States, only a handful of Ayes. But these would be convinced votes, and the Nays would not be too sure of themselves.

Two necessary revolutions: the spirit of willingly accepted atonement for the Twentieth Century and all its works, and the political structure of One World. The former is incomplete without the latter; the latter is impossible without the former. Under inspired leadership the two revolutions could be channeled into one, and fulfill each other.

Howard Comfort, an occasional contributor to HUMAN EVENTS, is a well-known classical scholar, and a member of the faculty of Haverford College.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events VOL. V, NO. 23

By Frank C. Hanighen June 9, 1948

How many men, plus a smoke-filled room, will it take to decide the Republican nomination? There was a time when the leaders of New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey could do the needful. This year, the number is the same but the alignment is transcontinental. Those who are in a position to know say that three state Governors can perform the task two weeks hence at Philadelphia. They are Duff of Pennsylvania, Green of Illinois and Warren of California. These men control, or should control, 182 votes; sufficient to swing the prize if and when a stalemate develops. They will be in a position to make a President, if they can get together and agree on a candidate.

Among knowledgeable GOP politicos, there is keen speculation as to what attitudes these three leaders take at the present time. Green of Illinois is for Taft. Duff of Pennsylvania has been often catalogued for Vandenberg. This column, however, learns authoritatively that he privately claims to prefer the following order of candidates: (1) Taft; (2) Vandenberg; (3) Speaker Martin. Finally, there is the problem of enigmatic Governor Warren. He is sitting impassively behind his cards and does not even hint at a preference. He is, reportedly, for -- Warren. Party leaders however will not back a man from California for first place. Accordingly, it is being urged that some persuasive party leader should approach Warren and talk to him about his responsibility; about the necessity for his backing one or other of the major contestants.

This raises the question of whether the three men can be brought together. In the old days, Boss Penrose was influential in harmonizing the views of the New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York leaders. Today there is no discernible mediator. The mission might be easier if all three delegations were firmly controlled by their leaders. Warren and Green do control their followers. But many doubt that Duff can effectively crack the whip over the backs of his group.

There is a schism in Pennsylvania now. Duff is at odds with National Committeeman Owlett because the latter has tried to win some of the delegates to Dewey's standard. And Dewey is one candidate whom Duff firmly opposes. Constructive efforts, however, are under way. The recent boom for Senator Martin as a real Presidential nominee (not merely "favorite son") has reportedly been inspired to give the delegation cohesiveness in early balloting; thus, it is calculated, Duff should stand a better chance of delivering the votes. All this accounts for the intense interest focused on Pennsylvania. Assuming that Warren eventually takes a reasonable stand, the Keystone state could prove the key to the problem of the nomination.

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Footnote on a non-political tour. On June 5, President Truman drew only about 2,000 people when he talked in the Omaha Coliseum which has a capacity of 10,000. In 1940, ex-President Herbert Hoover, at that time hardly a popular figure, filled the same hall to capacity.

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A corner of the curtain was lifted last week. For long, even specialists on the subject have been unable to describe with any exactitude the forces in our administration of Germany which continued to work for the Morgenthau ideas. During the past week, a newly-discovered alphabet title was presented to students not only of bureaucracy but also of Germany. It is a formidable one -- GARIOA, meaning Government And Relief In Occupied Areas. Publication of the House hearings on the ECA appropriations brought to light this variety of civil service fauna. It appears that GARIOA (it also operates in Japan) costs us about $700 million for

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relief in Germany alone. The figures were the subject of earnest scrutiny by House committee members when they discovered that ECA proposed to "co-ordinate" its efforts with GARIOA to the tune of an additional $549 million, bringing the total of our relief in Germany to $1,249 million. House members apparently became suspicious that the GARIOA personnel would be blanketed into ECA's foreign staff.

It remained for that controversial figure, Congressman Taber, to describe vividly what has been going on in Germany, under the "banner with a strange device", GARIOA. In a speech on June 4, Taber made the following remarks which at least in the Washington papers remained unreported: "This setup [GARIOA] was staffed with the apostles of the vicious Morgenthau Plan, designed primarily to prevent the re-establishment of German economy and aimed to reduce Germany to the status of a goat pasture. GARIOA is riddled with vindictive hatred, quite foreign to the American nature. . . . The Morgenthau boys engaged in their own peculiar type of sadism. They have blocked every attempt to bring about rehabilitation and recovery. Their revenge has cost the American taxpayer billions of dollars and it has made a mockery of our efforts to sell democracy. A direct result of this policy is the present German industrial production which stands at only 37 per cent of pre-war level. France is over 100 per cent. United Kingdom stands at 116 per cent. . . ."

One final X-ray plate on GARIOA. This column learns from well-informed sources the following facts about the personnel of this agency: (1) Many are former employees of OPA which probably included more Communists and fellow travellers than any other agency in Government. After the demise of OPA, a large number moved over (apparently with the blessings of the Administration) to GARIOA. (2) Out of approximately 3,500 GARIOA employees, only about 1,100 have been checked by the FBI.

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There was something very like hysteria in the attacks on Congressman Taber for his reductions in the ECA appropriations. The cause of such hysteria could be the subject matter for another article. It is enough to say here that the violent criticisms of the Taber action were grossly unfair. If there were no other evidence, a news dispatch from Paris on June 7 to the New York Herald Tribune should suggest that Taber had sound reasons for cutting. The dispatch said, "Mr. Averell Harriman is reported to feel that screening of individual national requirements by the 16-nation Organization for European Economic Co-operation should have been far more vigorous". The dispatch went on to say that ERP "will require considerable revision" and that purchase of tobacco, phosphates and dried fruit from the United States will probably be reconsidered.

This column consulted an elder statesman, one of a half-dozen whose views on economic questions have weight with leaders inside and outside the Administration. He said: "The criticism of Taber is preposterous. If anything, Taber dealt too leniently with the ECA funds. The economic situation has changed considerably since the time when the 16 nations offered their hasty estimates, even since the State Department framed its requests to Congress. The world prices for grains have fallen sharply. Today Argentina, which charged $5 a bushel for wheat last year, is willing to sell wheat for less than half that price. Other staples have declined and bumper crops are officially forecasted for this year. French and British industrial production is more than pre-war, and even Italian production is near normal. Additionally, ECA is sending to Germany an American steel committee which, with only a little effort, could get the German steel industry producing one million tons a month (instead of the present 300,000), thereby eliminating ECA money for American steel. It may turn out that Taber could have cut more drastically with no impairment of the ECA operation."

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The customary uncritical reception to announcements of policies on Germany was accorded publication of the Six-Power agreement of June 7. The agreement provides for the establishment of a German federal republic in Western Germany, as well as the creation of an international "authority" to control the Ruhr. Informed observers take particular exception to the latter part of the treaty. A board is set up composed of the United States, United Kingdom, France, the Benelux countries and Germany to control distribution of coal, coke and steel of the Ruhr. It is well to recall that Britain, Belgium, Luxembourg and France competed with pre-war German industry in the international market. Hence, it is not unfair to compare the proposed international authority to a corporation having a board of directors, a majority of whom are the corporation's competitors.

Another aspect of the treaty has stirred up opposition in the United States Senate. The State Department has not submitted this agreement to the Senate for approval. Senators Taft, Wherry and Kem have protested, saying that the State Department is acting unconstitutionally. Senator Taft said, "This proposed international agreement can only be regarded as a treaty, so far as the United States is concerned. As a treaty, establishment of this Ruhr authority will require approval of two thirds of the Senate, as specified in Article II, Section 2, of the Constitution." Senator Kem remarked, "This agreement is submitted to the French and British parliaments and they will either ratify or reject it this week, after debate. Apparently, only the United States Senate and the conquered Germans have no chance to pass on this treaty."

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Little was said publicly, but much was said privately, about a certain news item which barely made the inside pages last week. We refer to the plebiscite in Newfoundland, held June 3. One reason for the scant publicity in Washington was that the United States Government wanted to avoid doing or saying anything which might concievably impair our traditionally fine relations with Canada. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the United States was a major factor in the Newfoundland polling.

Newfoundlanders balloted to determine the future of their country. The referendum offered them the following three choices: (1) continuance of the commission form of government (in effect Crown Colony status); (2) confederation with Canada; (3) self-government. The catch was in the last question. Those who have recently visited Newfoundland and studied the electoral campaign say that the supporters of self-government really want union with the United States. The issue was not mentioned on the hustings by common consent. But annexation by the United States, it is emphasized, was the key issue. Indeed some observers predict that, if self-government wins, the legislature will soon thereafter vote to apply for admission to the United States.

The motive behind the union movement is economic. Newfoundland went bankrupt in 1930 and had to accept a commission form of government proposed by the United Kingdom. Newfoundlanders are fed up with this status. On the other hand, Canada cannot offer a rewarding market for the country's principal products, fish and iron ore. But the United States can take both, and U. S. interests would by no means be averse. The rich iron ore deposits would admirably serve the U. S. industrial machine when, a few years hence, the Mesaba range runs out. Not only industrial interests but also official planners in Washington have been watching the situation closely. As it stands, the voting last week was inconclusive, although encouraging for the self-government supporters. The latter got a plurality, with pro-Canada elements second. A clear majority is required and so these two factions will fight it out in a run-off election during the coming month.

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Book Events

The American Democracy: A Commentary and Interpretation, by Harold J. Laski. New York: The Viking Press, $6.50. Reviewed by J. M. Lalley.

Lord Melbourne is reported to have said that he wished he could be as sure of anything as Macaulay was of everything. I dare say that Professor Laski's readers have the same feeling about him. Macaulay of course saw fit to preserve a certain consistency in his certitudes, but Professor Laski recognizes no such obligation. Without ever abandoning the oracular accent he tells us that Mrs. Mary B. G. Eddy was a greedy quack and that she was a person of profound sincerity; that before the Civil War rich Americans were in the habit of sending their children to private schools and that it was not until after the war they began to do so; that the faculties of American universities have an unusually high proportion of vigorous and independent minds and that American professors are bulldozed into social conformity by the prejudices of prelates and the bigotry of trustees; that after the death of President Roosevelt the political clock was automatically moved back to the Hoover-Coolidge era and that no future administration will ever dare to efface certain accomplishments of the New Deal; that Mr. Henry L. Mencken is an irresponsible clown and a genuine scholar; that Mr. John Crowe Ransom and his disciples are reactionary escapists and the Kenyon Review an excellent publication; that American isolationism is a blind refusal to recognize the importance of the struggle for world markets and that American imperialism is leading us into unprovoked war with Soviet Russia. Such paradoxes, scattered prodigally throughout the 760 pages of Professor Laski's book, sustain the assertion by his publishers that his knowledge and understanding of the United States are "overwhelming".

His study of American social history seems to be an effort to revise, in the light of Socialist principles, the work of de Tocqueville and Viscount Bryce, who were, I take it, somewhat misled by a superstitious veneration of logic. Thus de Tocqueville who hoped that the religious spirit in America might serve to curb the materialist tendencies inherent in democracy, is proved to have been in error by the fact that the churches, by and large, have not been among the most militant fighters for a socialized economy. Indeed, says Mr. Laski, the churches have surrendered all too readily and cheerfully to the disintegrating tendencies of American capitalism; for what, he asks, is the pursuit of eternal salvation but another version of the familiar American success story, involving a somewhat "different view of the significance of time"? The churches, instead of becoming a revolutionary force, have actually accepted the secularist values and view of the world that are promoted by Big Business through such agencies as Hollywood, the Reader's Digest and the publications of Mr. Luce. The members of Protestant churches have, it seems, no interest in dogmas; they merely seek the confirmation of their ethical prejudices. They wish to be told that questions of social good and evil can be reduced to questions of good men and bad men -- a shocking heresy which proves that it is not religion but religiosity that prevails.

In education, too, Professor Laski perceives the same general unwillingness to tamper with the foundations of the American social order. The "pathetic escapism" of the Thomistic enthusiasts at the University of Chicago is merely a way of repudiating the conventional values without giving offense to the businessmen. If, as is said, a unifying principle is lacking in American life and education, it is because the capitalists will not recognize the necessity of Socialism, and the squeamish American mind balks at the notion of coercion which is implicit in the collectivist principle. No wonder then that educators are without courage to face realities, or that the Harvard report, which has so much to say about the need of ultimate values, has nothing to say about the California Okies or the Southern Negroes.

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